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Guru Gobind Sing's Religious Outlook

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GURU GOBIND SINGH'S RELIGIOUS OUTLOOK

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While studying history (1), one must do so very carefully, and keep certain factors, such as the subject matter discussed, its writer, and the circumstances under which the particular aspect has been studied, in view. This is essential in order to form a clear picture, as historians are apt to make incorrect statements. For example, Cunningham writes that "The violent end and the last injunction of the martyr Guru made a deep impression on the mind of Gobind, and in brooding over his own loss and the fallen condition of his country, he became the irreconcilable foe of the Muhammadan name." (2) This trend has been maintained by other writers, both Indian as well as European, without any justification and without checking up with the facts. A few examples are given below :—

"The violent and miserable end of the martyred Guru, and his last injunctions had made such a strong impression on the mind of Govind, that he longed to wreak vengeance on the murderers of his father and the persecutors of his race, and became the inveterate

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1. "History is taught for the glorification of the nation." (A Suggestion for Peace, Thompson.)
 2. A History of the Sikhs, J.D. Cunningham, p. 59.

and irreconcilable enemy of every Mahammedan.”
Latif (3)

Pincot writes : “It is not improbable that the bitter enmosity he felt against Muhammadanism was due to the fact that his father, Tegh Bahadur, had been murdered at Delhi by order of the Emperor Aurangzeb.” (4)

Princep : “...Gooroo Govind, who lived in the time of Aurangzeb, and who, meeting persecution, converted followers from peaceable and industrious citizens, into deadly enemies to the Mughal Empire and Mooslim faith.”

J.N. Sarkar writes that Guru Gobind Singh “organised the sect into the most efficient and implacable enemy of the Mughal Empire and the Muslim faith.” (5)

Before coming to any conclusions regarding the correctness or otherwise of these statements, it is worthwhile examining the Guru's writings, his deeds and the Sikh teachings.

Saiyad Bhikhan Shah.

Let us start from the very beginning of the Guru's life. The day he was born at Patna (Bihar), a holy Muslim

3. History of the Panjab, Syed Muhammad Latif, p. 261.
4. Sikh History, F. Pincot in The Sikh Religion, A Symposium, p. 79.
5. History of Aurangzeb, J.N. Sarkar, Vol. iii, p. 314.

saint, Saiyad Bhikhan Shah, a resident of Thaska (near Thanesar in Haryana), who, contrary to the Muslim faith to pray facing to the west, this day bowed towards the east. (6) This unusual action on the part of the Faqir surprised his followers who wanted to know the reason for his doing so. The Pir replied that he prayed neither to the west nor to the east, but to God; and "to-day God has sent new light on this side, and it's seen in the East."

To satisfy his followers, the Pir took a few of them with him to Patna. On arrival there, he made for the house where Gobind Rai (as he was then known) was born, and requested to see the young holy one. To verify the truth of his convictions, he had brought with him two small earthen pots, one containing milk and the other filled with water. According to the Pir's thinking, if the child touched the pot with milk in it he would be for the Muslims, and if he touched the other pot containing water the holy one would be a partisan of the Hindus. But, to the surprise of all, the child put one hand each on both the pots. Seeing this, the Pir exclaimed : "Blessed, blessed art thou, O Master of both, this country needed thee now more than any one else."

Again, while still at Patna, two Muslim nobles-Rahim Bakhsh and Karim Bakhsh-fascinated by the young one donated to him two gardens and some land in Patna. These lands still form part of the Gurdwara property there

6. Gurpartap Suraj Granth, Bhai Santokh Singh, Ras 12, Ansu 14.

This could not have happened if the Gurus-house had been against the Muslims.

After sometime, the Guru left Patna for Anandpur Sahib. *En route*, he visited Varanasi, Ayudhya, Lucknow, Lakhnaur and many other places. At the last named place, whereto the Guru's mother belonged, he stayed for six days when people from the surrounding areas flocked to the place for *darshan*. Pir Bhikhan Shah (already mentioned above) visited the Guru at this place too.

Another day, while going in a *pulki*, Faqir Arif Din asked the carriers to halt when he reached the place where the child Guru was halting. He went to see Gobind who was at this time playing with other boys. The Faqir witnessed spiritual light in the child's face and bowed before him. It was not to the liking of the Faqir's followers whom he told : "I know not Islam or Kufar, I know only my God, and I bow before His light. That is what I have done."

The Battle of Bhangani.

Now let us proceed further and see what happened after he had ascended the *guru gaddi*. First of all comes the battle of Bhangani (near Paonta Sahib in Himachal Pradesh) where the Guru had to fight with the forces of the Hindu hill rajas. Long before the battle took place, Pir Budhu Shah, a Muslim faqir of Sadhaura, district Ambala, had placed at the disposal of the Guru five hundred Pathans who had once served in the army of Aurangzeb. But, before the battle commenced, the Pathans, with the exception of Kale Khan and his 100 men, deserted the Guru and went over to the hill rajas on the promise of

a good reward. When the news reached Budhu Shah, he was very much disgusted and felt it as a personal disgrace. So, in order not to let down the Guru, the Pir alongwith his brothers, his four sons and a force of 700 Muslim disciples proceeded to Bhangani and participated in the battle on the side of the Guru. The battle was decided in favour of the Guru, but the Pir lost two of his sons and a number of his disciples in killed. The Pir, instead of mourning the loss, was happy that his two sons and the disciples had given their lives in a good cause.

Babeke and *Babarke* i.e. successors of Guru Nanak and Babar had co-existed as the spiritual and temporal kings respectively without any confrontation. As such Guru Gobind Singh's idea was not to oppose the Mughal Government. As for the Mughals, they too had taken no action against Guru Gobind Singh during the period 1675 to 1699 A.D. But the situation took a turn after the battle of Nadaun when the Guru helped the ungrateful Hindu hill rajas in their short-lived "rebellion". Although he had not acted in this manner with a view to avenging the death of his father, but the Mughal Government "sought to penalise him for his involvement"; and from now onwards, Guru Gobind Singh "became the direct target of the Mughal policy." (7)

Then Guru Gobind Singh moved to Anandpur Sahib, where two striking incidents took place relating to the subject. The first relates to the laudable action of Bhai

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7. The Sikh Review, Calcutta, (Guru Gobind Singh 300th Anniversary Number)

Kanhaiya. During one of the battles at Anandpur Sahib, Bhai Kanhaiya was seen serving water to the wounded, irrespective of whether he was a Sikh or a Muslim (8). Some Sikhs did not like it and reported the matter to the Guru. When the Guru enquired from Bhai Kanhaiya why he acted in the manner reported, the latter replied that he was not serving any Sikh or a Muslim. On the other hand, wherever he went, whosoever he saw, he saw only his Guru's image in him. The Bhai believed in what the third Guru had said in the Anand :

e netro merio har tum mail jot dhari,
har bin awar na dekho koil.

(O eyes of mine, God infused light into you, look at none but God.) So, how could he be blamed for serving his Guru! Guru Gobind Singh, mighty pleased with the explanation, encouraged the Bhai to carry on with the service of humanity. (9) This shows that the Guru was not fighting against any religion, but his fight was against tyranny and injustice. Sarkar is therefore not correct in saying that "Now at least open war broke out between the Sikhs and Islam." (10) The Sikhs under Guru

8. Jim Singhan ko jae pilawai
tim Turkan ko nit tiptawai. (Suraj Parkash)
9. Bhai Kanhaiya's followers are called *Sewapanthis*; they are also known as Addan Shahis from Addan Shah "a rich banker who devoted his wealth and his leisure to the propagation of their doctrines." (The Sikh Religion, M.A. Macauliffe, Vol. v, p. 174.)
10. History of Aurangzeb, Sarkar, iii, 313.

Gobind Singh had taken up the sword against the government of the day; it is a coincidence that the rulers of the time happened to be Muslims. It is said that the arrows released by Guru Gobind Singh during battles were tipped with gold worth rupees sixteen each to help the wounded for getting treatment. This shows his concern for human beings.

The second incident relates to the Mughal commander, General Said Khan (11), (some give his name as Said Beg) who, in A.D. 1701 at the head of a large Mughal force, supported by Hindu hill rajas, was sent to attack Anandpur Sahib. On arrival at Anandpur Sahib, the General refused to fight against the Guru; he became one of the Guru's admirers. Later, General Said Khan died fighting in one of the battles at Anandpur Sahib. (12)

Guru Gobind Singh respected other religions and their scriptures. This is why he abandoned the stronghold of Anandpur Sahib on the besiegers' swearing by Quran (the sacred book of Muslims) and cow, an animal revered by Hindus. However, both the Hindus and the Muslims violated the oath no sooner than the Guru abandoned the fort.

The battle of Chamkaur.

Then came the battle of Chamkaur, where the Guru defied the odds against him for a considerable time before

11. The General was a brother of Bibi Nasiran, the wife of Budhu Shah.

12. Macauliffe, v, 162.

leaving the place. After leaving Chamkaur, the Guru got separated from his family and his Sikhs. At Ropar, he was provided refuge by a Muslim; the latter when asked by the Mughal troops as to who was inside the room said, "My daughter and my son-in-law!" Thereafter he wandered about alone in the jungles of Machhiwara while the Royal troops patrolled the area in order to apprehend the Guru. Here, one day, two of the *panj piaras* found the Guru and planned the latter's escape. In the process they were helped by two Muslim brothers, Nabi Khan and Ghani Khan. All the four of them placed the Guru in an improvised palanquine and started the journey. *En route* they were stopped by a patrol of the Mughal army and questioned about the passenger being carried. The Muslim brothers answered that they were carrying *Uch da Pir*. (13) The patrol commander did not believe it and wanted the *Uch da Pir* to be identified by a responsible person. Qazi Nur Muhammad was sent for; when he arrived and looked at the Guru, he bowed his head with reverence, saying the passenger was really the *Uch da Pir*. (The Qazi had earlier taught Persian to Guru Gobind Singh.)

Later, at Jagraon, the Guru was refused sanctuary by the Hindu mahant Kirpal Das whereas a Muslim, Rai Kallah, chaudhari of Jagraon and Rai Kot provided the Guru with the much needed refuge. Rai Kallah took a

13. *Uch da Pir* means a holy man; it also meant the holy man of Uch, a place near Multan (now in Pakistan), the Pirs of which place were well known.

great risk, but said, "Let happen what may. If Government brands him (Guru Gobind Singh) a rebel, that Government is not loyal to God."

As already stated above, after the battle of Chamkaur, the Guru had got separated from his family. His two younger sons and his mother were betrayed by a brahmin who handed them over to the Governor of Sarhind. The Governor was not in favour of harming the young ones but one Sucha Nand, a Hindu khatri, insisted that the youngsters be executed. (14) On the other hand, the Nawab of Malerkotla (a Muslim) who was present in the Court, pleaded against their execution. The Nawab had even offered inwriting to give whatever the Governor wished, only if he would not execute the young sahibzadas. (15) It is a different matter that both the young ones were eventually buried alive in a wall.

Guru's army.

Another important point is that Guru Gobind Singh's army had a number of Muslims also. In his book *Hindu-Muslim Ittehad*, Muhammad yusaf (16) writes : "At the time

14. Latif, 265.

15. Because of this act of the Nawab of Malerkotla, the Sikhs have ever since looked upon the Muslims of Malerkotla with benignity. Even during the 1947 holocaust when both sides had gone berserk, no harm came to these Muslims.

16. Quoted by Dr. Balbir Singh in his book, *Kalam di Karamat*, (in Panjabi), fifth impression, February 1980, pp. 123-124.

of the siege of Anandpur during 1759 Bikarmi, among those who fought on the Guru's side and showed manliness Mir Beg and Mamu Khan are well known." The Muslims' joining the Guru's army clearly shows that the Guru Sahib neither had any enmity with Muslims nor the Muslims had any grouse against him. Had it been so, neither any Muslim would have enrolled himself in the Guru's army nor (any Muslim) appreciated the manliness (of th Guru). He further writes that "he never took any initiative (to fight with) the royal forces; on the other hand, he did so in self-defence which becomes of every brave and chivalrous (person)." "The Guru Sahib was never, never an enemy of the establishment. He never tried to measure swords with it." "He never carried out depredations in any part of the Empire. Had he been the enemy of the empire, he would have carried out the depredations a number of times as he was a force to be reckoned with. But history is witness to it that he never did such a thing."

This gives a lie to the assertions of persons like Latif who would have us believe that the Guru was an "irreconcilable and inveterate enemy of every Mohammad-an." Nor Guru Tegh Bahadur had left such injunction before his martyrdom. And there is no such reference in *Bachittar Natak*. The Guru had no ill-will against any individual. It was the evil system that he wanted to destroy, and it was against its protagonists that his efforts were directed. The Guru in his autobiography says: "I came into the world charged with the duty to uphold the right in every place, to destroy sin and evil...the only reason I took birth was to see that righteousness may

flourish, that good may live and tyrants be torn out by their roots." (17)

In his Darbar at Paonta Sahib, Guru Gobind Singh had fifty-two poets the breakdown of which was : Sikhs 8, Hindus 35 and Muslims 9.

During the war of succession that took place after the death of Aurangzeb, Guru Gobind Singh helped Bahadur Shah, Aurangzeb's eldest son and thus the rightful successor, sit on the throne. This he did despite the Guru's father having been killed on orders of Bahadur Shah's father, and it was during Aurangzeb's time that the Guru's two sons were buried alive in a wall at Sarhind, that his two sons and numerous Sikhs had been killed in battles with the Mughals, and he himself had to roam about in jungles without shelter, without a companion. When Guru Gobind Singh was injured at Nander through an assassin's knife, it was Bahadur Shah who sent his own physician for the treatment of the wound.

Teachings

Sikhism believes in the Unity of God and the Brotherhood of mankind. Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith, had once declared that there was no Hindu, there was no Muslim: that the division was imaginary, it was man-made. This he preached throughout the length and breadth of the Indo-Pak sub-continent, as well as abroad. During his travels (called *udasis*), his companion Mardana was a Muslim by faith. The latter was the first person to get the

itle of "Bhai", a thing not known practised in any other religion. He never attacked/denounced Islam, Hinduism or for that matter any other faith nor denigrated their prophets. He visited Mecca and Jagannath Puri. He advised Hindus and Muslims to be true Hindus and to be true Muslims; he never tried to convert any one to his own faith. The result was that both Hindus and Muslims considered Guru Nanak to belong to them. (18) And when he departed from this world, there was a quarrel over the mode of disposal of his remains.

Guru da langar.

Guru Nanak created the institution of *langar* where all, irrespective of their caste, creed, colour or region sit together and partake the meals prepared at one place.

The successor Gurus further developed upon these teachings. The fourth and fifth Gurus helped Hindus and Muslims alongwith the Sikhs, to establish their business in the Guru Bazar at Amritsar. Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru, built "with thoughtful impartiality" both a temple and a mosque at Sri Hargobindpur, lying on the western bank of the river Beas. (19) And in a battle at Kartarpur (Jalandhar) he told the fatally wounded Painda Khan to say *Kalma* as he was a Muslim. (20)

18. Guru Nanak Shah faqir,
Hindu da Guru Musalman da pir.

19. Macauliffe, iv, 119.

20. Jab giran lag kaih Guru udhar, tav Turk janam kalma ucar. (Suraj Parkash) "Thou art a Musلمان. Now is the time to repeat the creed." (Translation, (Macauliffe.)

Gurdwaras.

The Sikh place of worship, called gurdwara, is open to all irrespective of the faith one adhered to. Any one can say his prayers in a gurdwara; free boarding and lodging is provided to any visitor. Guru Arjun, the fifth Guru, and great-grandfather of Guru Gobind Singh, had the foundation stone of the Darbar Sahib (Golden gurdwara), Amristar, the highest religious seat of the Sikhs, laid by a Muslim Faqir Mian Mir of Lahore. This is also peculiar to Sikhism alone. **Guru Granth Sahib.**

Guru Arjun compiled Guru Granth Sahib, the sacred book of the Sikhs. The Granth includes the *bani* of the first five Sikh Gurus, the sayings of a number of bhagats of various shades-Hindu, Muslim, so called untouchables, etc. Later, at Damdama Sahib, Guru Gobind Singh incorporated in the Granth, the *bani* of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth guru of the Sikhs. And before his death Guru Gobind Singh proclaimed Granth Sahib henceforward to be the Guru of the Sikhs. This was done with the known fact that in the Guru Granth Sahib was included the *bani* of non-Sikhs including Muslims. He never even thought of deleting the hymns of the Muslim faqirs. Guru Granth Sahib contains various names of God, used in Islam and Hinduism, and some more invented by the Gurus themselves. Similarly, Guru Gobind Singh's Jaap Sahib has numerous Muslim names. "The use of these sonorous and dignified names," writes Leohlin, "may well have been, among other things, an early attempt to break down communalism, and to return to the reconciling efforts of Guru Nanak, an attempt that alas! was frustrated by the bigotry that became all too prevalent among the Mughal emperors." (21)

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21. The Granth of Guru Gobind Singh and the Khalsa Brotherhood, C.H. Leohlin, (1971), p. 75.

Humanity as one.

Guru Gobind Singh's teachings were in consonance with those of the nine Gurus preceding him. He considered all the human beings the same; the Guru said:

The temple and the mosque are the same,
Puja and namaz are the same,
All men are one, it is through error
That they appear different.....
Their eyes are the same, their ears are the same,
They are of one body, one build,
A compound of earth, air, fire and water.
Allah and abhekh are the same,
The Puran and the Kuran are the same,
They are alike, all the creation of the one. (22)

He followed the fifth Guru's saying that "The whole world has sprung from one light, how can some be good and some

22. Dehora masit soi puja ao nimaz oi,
Manas sabai ek pai anek ko bharmao hai.
Ekai nain ekai kan ekai deh ekai ban,
Rhak bad atish ao ab ko ralaao hai.
Allah Abhek soi Puran ao Kuran oi,
Ek he sarup sabai ek hi banao hai/86. (Akal Ustate)

bad ?" (23) Again, the fifth Guru said that there was no one as an enemy nor stranger, for he could get along with all. (24)

That many Muslims embraced Sikhism proves Guru Gobind Singh's catholicity, and that it wasn't purely a branch of Hinduism, but is a separate proselytising creed.

Taking up of the sword.

If Guru Gobind Singh took up the sword it was the last resort, because all the peaceful means had failed. His sword struck "tyrants and men", and was used in self-defence. It was never taken up in a revengeful manner, as he carried no ill-will towards any one. In this connection he wrote :

Chu kar az hama hilte dar guzhasht,

Halal ast burdun b-shamshir dast.

(i.e. when all other means get exhausted, it is rightful to take up the sword.)

European writers seem to have intentionally given wrong interpretation. For example, Lepel Griffin writes that "The main idea of Sikhism was the destruction of Islam, and it was unlawful to salute Muhammadans, to associate with them, or to make peace with them on any terms." (25) Even

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23. Awwal allah nur upaia kudrat be sab bande,
Ek nur te sab jag upjia kaun bhale ko mande
24. Na ko bairi nahe begana,
sagal sang ham ko ban ai.
25. Ranjit Singh, Lepel Griffin, pp. 113-115

JN. Sarkar has failed to understand Sikhs and Sikhism. He writes that Guru Gobind Singh "organised the sect into the most efficient and implacable enemy of the Mughal empire and the Muslim faith." (26) Nothing could be so farfetched. The war was not between the Sikhs and Islam as Sarkar states, but was between Sikhs and the tyrannous rulers who just happened to be Muslim. Had the rulers belonged to a different faith, Guru Gobind Singh, under similar circumstances, would have acted in a like manner. Aurangzeb, during his last days, impressed by the actions and teaching of Guru Gobind Singh, had expressed a desire to see the Guru.

Post Guru Period

The spirit of love for mankind, kindled, by the Gurus did not end with them. The light was kept burning by their followers. A few examples are narrated hereunder.

Banda Bahadur. First comes Banda Bahadur who took up leadership of the Sikhs after Guru Gobind Singh. He took up arms and shook the mighty Mughal Empire to its very roots. Although he was a deadly enemy of Wazir Khan, faujdar of Sarhind, the killer of the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh, but he was no fanatic; he carried no ill-will towards Muslims in general. He proclaimed: "We do not oppose Muslims as we do not oppose Islam, We only oppose tyranny, and we only oppose usurpation of the political power which belongs to the people and not to the privileged individuals or to Mughals." (27) As a result of

26. Sarkar, op cit, iii, 314.

27. Ruqaat-i-Amin-ud-Daula, Dastur-ul-Insha, Imperial Daily Diarier, quoted by Kapur Singh in his article in the **Sikh Review** July 1975.

the secular policy followed by the Banda, about 5,000 Muslims had joined his army. He looked after them, fixed their wages and allowance, and permitted them to read *khutba* and *namaz*. They were free to say prayers in their own fashion. A Royal newswriter wrote on 21 Rabi-ul-Awwal (28th April 1711) as under :—

“The wretched Nanak-worshipper has his camp in the town of Kalanaur up to the 19th instant. During this period he has promised and proclaimed, ‘I do not oppress the Muslims.’ Accordingly, for any Muslim who approached him, he fixed a daily allowance and wages, and looks after him. He has permitted them to read *khutba* and *Namaz* as such, five thousand Muslims have gathered round him. Having entered his friendship, they are free to shout their call and say prayers in the army of the wretched (Sikhs).” (28)

Misl period

During the misl period also, the Sikhs built mandirs as well as masjids. The Sikhs occupied Lahore in 1765 A.D. And when Ahmad Shah Abdali invaded India for the seventh time (1764-65), he found the citizens of Lahore “favourably inclined towards their Sikh masters who had been just and considerate towards their subjects, Hindus and Muslims.” When the Abdali, placing Lahore under Dadan Khan, marched towards Afghanistan (1767), the Sikhs reappeared, fanned out and recovered their possessions. The grandees of the city such as Mian Muhammad Ashiq, Mir Nathu Shah, Hafiz Qadir Bakhsh, Lala Maharaj Singh and

28. Akhbar-i-Darbar-i Mualla, reproduced in Panjab Past and Present, Oct. 1970.

others advised Dadan Khan to hand over the city to the Sikhs. They pleaded : "The people are very glad and satisfied with the rule of the Sikhs. They might open the city gates in the night or break holes in the city walls and thus admit them into the town. You will in that case fall a victim to their wrath. In our opinion, therefore, you should have an interview with them and after having settled something for yourself by way of allowance or jagir should entrust the town to them." (29) This is a clear proof of the Sikhs' secular outlook. Even Maharaja Ala Singh of Patiala (1691-1765) followed a secular policy. He employed Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. He never destroyed a mosque or a mandir, nor did he resort to any type of religious persecution.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

The Panjab, under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the great Sikh ruler, was a secular state in fact. He appointed persons to the various posts according to the individual's merit, irrespective of the caste, creed or region. As for the Muslims, they occupied high responsible offices both at his Court as well as in the army. For example, Faqir Aziz-ud-din was his foreign minister; the other faqir brothers also occupied high posts. The Maharaja's artillery was mainly composed of Muslims. Among his top generals were a number of Muslims also Ghous Muhammad Khan, Sultan Muhammad Khan Ilahi Bakhsh and so on. Syed Maheed-ud-din writes that "there was complete religious harmony during Ranjit

29. Ali-ud-din, Ibrat Namah, 140b 144B, quoted by H.R. Gupta, in a History of the Sikhs, i, 272.

Singh's reign," (30) Under his rule there were no forcible conversions. The Maharaja have had constructed a number of mandirs and mosques. During his reign no religious place was desecrated as was done by the Afghan and the Mughal rulers, or as is happening to-day in India said to be a secular state. The Maharaja's contemporary, Fatch Singh Ahluwalia had built a Shiv Mandir at Kapurthala. (31)."

When Ranjit Singh's empire was lost, Shah Muhammad (a Muslim) expressed a feeling of anguish as the "Hindus and Muslims had lived in amity as never before."

British period

The practice was followed by the rulers of the Sikh States also during the British rule in India. The Sikh rulers employed Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus. Some of them even had Muslims as their Prime Ministers. The Maharaja of Kapurthala had built at public cost a gurdwara, a mosque and a mandir all at Kapurthala. None of the Sikh Rajas is known to have used force or offered incentives to convert their subjects to Sikhism. No religious persecution, or discrimination based on religion is known to have been carried out; no mandir or mosque is known to have been desecrated or destroyed in their States.

In 1930 A.D., in Peshawar when the Pathans were sacrificing their lives for the sake of the country, Master Tara Singh, the renowned leader of the Sikhs with 100 Sikhs

30. The Real Ranjit Singh, Waheeduddin p. 28.

31. Mudhli 17win Sadi da Panjab, Fd. JS. Grewal, p. 7.

decided to go to Peshawar to protest against the police atrocities and mingle his blood with the blood of his Muslim brethren. (32)

Post-1947 period

In 1947 Indo-Pak sub-continent achieved independence but was divided into two : a Muslim Pakistan and the Hindu Bharat. The Sikhs threw their lot with Bharat. In the Independent India too, the Sikhs have followed the teachings of their Gurus-have practised tolerance and shown respect for the prophets, places and books of other religions. For example, the foundation of Guru Gobind Singh Bhavan at the campus of the Panjabi University, Patiala, was laid by Dr. Zakir Hussain (a Muslim) on 27th December 1967. The Bhavan is meant to study the five major religions of the world : Sikhism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism. The building is "a five-pettalled" structure with "no rear or flank and will look identical from all sides giving equal importance to the five constituent department."

Guru Gobind Singh Foundation, established in 1967, on the 300th birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh, has decided to build the following memorials :—

- (a) Pir Budhu Shah Memorial Girls School, a library and a park at Sadhaura, district Ambala. Efforts are being made to obtain cooperation from the Haryana Government to give shape to the project;
- (b) A Nursing Home, at a cost of two lakhs of rupees, in memory of Nabi Khan and Ghani Khah at

32. Freedom Struggle, Nation Book Trust of India Publication, pp. 171-172.

Machhiwara, Ludhiana district. This project has since been completed. The Operation Theatre named Ghani Khan Memorial Operation Theatre, was inaugurated on 18th June, 1982, by the Health Minister of the Panjab.

This has been done despite the fact that the Sikh gurdwaras have been attacked, Guru Granth Sahib desecrated, cigarettes thrown in their holy sarovers. Here are some examples.

In 1967, Hindus of Calcutta created trouble over the Baghmari gurdwara in Calcutta. The gurdwara was ransacked and set fire to by the Hindus, and the authorities kept on looking as spectators. As a protest against it, the Calcutta Sikhs decided to take out a procession. All along the proposed route of the procession bricks, stones, etc. were collected in Hindu houses, to be rained upon the Sikhs when the procession passed along these houses. Here the Muslims, on learning of this hostile act, helped the Sikhs save their lives.

Another case is of a mandir being built near a gurdwara at Karnal, in Haryana, just to spite the Sikhs. The State Government has taken no action against the culprits.

During the 1971 Indo-Pak war in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), the Muslim women of the area were denuded by their co-religionists and left in the open. When the Sikhs troops arrived there, they removed their own turbans and gave these to the Muslim women to cover themselves.

On 26th December 1975, the Muslims of Bombay organised celebrations in connection with Guru Tegh Bahadur's

300th Death anniversary at Vallabh Bhai Patel Stadium, Bombay; Sikhs helped them in this matter. Both the Sikhs and the Muslims seemed to be working according to the following couplet of Iqbal :—

Mazhab nahin sikhata apas men bair rakhna,
Hindi hain ham, watan hai Hindustan hamara.

But the papers like The Times of India, Indian Express, Free Press Journal, etc., (all controlled by the majority community) “took little note of such an a importance function.” (33)

It will be seen that compared to the followers of other religions, the Sikhs generally are far more tolerant and less fanatic. Writing about the Sikhs in 1697 A.D., Munshi Sujana Rai said ; “Most of them have cleared their hearts of the pollution arising from worldly connections and have torn asunder the screen of worldly strife and wrangle from their bosoms. Relatives and strangers, friends and foes, are all one to them. They treat them alike. With friends they live harmoniously, and with their foes they live at peace.” (34) “The idea of toleration,” writes Dr. A.S. Bannerji, ‘and co-operation with men professing other faiths were deeply rooted in Sikh tradition, and Ranjit Singh followed that tradition in evolving a political system unaffected by religious differences.’ (35)

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33. The Sikh Review, Calcutta, February 1976, pp. 16-19.
 34. Khulasat-ul Tawarikh, Munshi Sujana Rai, quoted by Prof. Kartar Singh in Life of Guru Gobind Singh, p. 206, fn.
 35. The Sikh Review, Maharaja Ranjit Singh Birth Bicentenary Volume, 1980.

The Sikh prayer always ends with the words, "Sarbat da bhala", i.e. for the good of all without any exception.
THIS IS THEIR TEACHING.

SUMMING UP

Guru Gobind Singh, writes Prof. Abdul Majid, "was not at all inimical towards Islam or Muslim.....Guru Gobind Singh had many Muslim devotees, who held him in very high esteem." (36)

So, the great prophet who considered the humanity as one, for whom there was no difference between a mandir and a masjid, pooja and namaz; who proclaimed there was no enemy nor was there any stranger for him; the saint soldier on whose birth Muslim faqirs bowed towards the place of his birth; the great soldier for whose sake the Muslims fought battles and sacrificed even their own dear ones; against whom Muslim generals refused to fight; the great Pir whose very life was saved by Muslims; for whose sons' sake a Muslim Nawab pleaded and offered all to save their lives; the great Guru who proclaimed Guru Granth Sahib, containing hymns of Muslims also, as the Guru of the Sikhs; who respected hymns of the Muslims; whose followers serve all with water and food without distinction of caste creed, colour and at the end of their prayers pray for the good of all mankind; how can such an one be considered to be the enemy of any particular community, or faith, leave alone Islam? It is absurd even to think like this. He was against the rulers of the time, who were tyrants and unjust and who just happened to be Muslims. Had the rulers been of

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36. The Sikh Review, Guru Gobind Singh 300th Birth Anniversary Volume, pp. 35-39.

any other faith and behaved likewise, Guru Gobind Singh would have certainly acted in a similar manner.

It will be seen that the teachings of Islam and Sikhism are so close to each other; as such there should have been no rift between the followers of these religions. But circumstances were such that the political affairs turned religious. This is bound to happen anywhere at any time.

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Guru Nanak Dev Mission came into being in the year 1963 with the sole aim of imparting the message of Sikh Gurus to general public, and aspecially to the people of younger generation. For this end in view it provides reading material in the form of booklets, everymonth, in Punjabi, English, and Hindi.

The Mission is a non-profit organisation. None of its workers or executive members is a paid employee. Accordingly the booklets are made available for free distribution at mere cost price. Members of the Mission get these free of charge.

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Secretary

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